

Century began. In its early stages, it was hard to see. But it was there. It was a knock on the door late at night. It was a forced train ride to a far away place. Shamefully and secretly, the Holocaust began. Before it was over, more than six million Jews would give their lives. Yet the impact of this tragedy did not stop there. As the author and Holocaust survivor Elie Weisel once said, "Not all victims were Jews. But all Jews were victims."

And so while the world lost the Holocaust victims, the Holocaust victims' impact was not lost on the world. If nothing else, this horror awakened the world to the need for a Jewish nation. For too long, Jews were adrift in the world. Without any hope. Without any home.

50 years ago this month that changed. The descendants of Abraham and David once again created a nation called Israel. Against all the odds, the Jewish nation began. And survived. And grew. And conquered. Today, Israel is a thriving nation of almost six million citizens. It remains the only democracy in the Middle East. And it continues to serve as one of America's staunchest allies in the world.

As we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the birth of the modern Israel, we can take great pride in the role America played in helping to create this beacon of hope in the Middle East. And we can draw strength from the courage, conviction, and commitment of this Democratic nation.

Yes, there have been struggles. But the suffering has increased the resolve of these heroic people.

Yes, there have been tragedies. But the cost of freedom has never been cheap, and the Israeli people have always been willing to meet it.

And yes, there have been all kinds of setbacks. But what does not destroy Israel makes it stronger.

After 50 years, the nation of Israel remains. Proud. Prepared. And free. God bless this nation, their people, and their future. And may God preserve their special place in the world and in our hearts.

#### HONORING THE QUEENS BOROUGH PUBLIC LIBRARY

**HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 30, 1998*

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to applaud the achievement of the Queens Borough Public Library which has grown to become by far and away the busiest library in the entire nation. The following article from the Washington Post describes how the library has continually sought input from a growing immigrant community. The Queens system checks out over 15.3 million books and materials a year, and spends more money per capita on books than any other major urban American library. The Queens Borough Public Library should serve as a model of how one institution can bring together people of various races and ethnicities for the good of an entire community.

A BOROUGHFUL OF BOOKWORMS—MOTIVATED IMMIGRANTS MAKE QUEENS LIBRARY BUSIEST IN U.S.

By Blaine Harden

NEW YORK, April 27—Pin-Pin Lin treks twice a week with her two sons and a big

shopping bag to a crowded library in the borough of Queens. The Taiwanese immigrant herds her boys as they plunder books from library shelves and toss them in the bag.

Sitting between her sons at a library table while they riffle through the books, she looks up words in an English-Cantonese dictionary and frets about any "no-good" English words they might read, speak or think.

"I no want to miss anything," explains Lin, who every Thursday morning, when her boys are in school, attends English language class at the Queens library. "If I don't learn about American culture and speak English, I could lose them. If they think I not understand, they not do what I say."

Book-obsessed, worrywart immigrants like Pin-Pin Lin are the driving reason why the Queens Public Library is far and away the busiest in the United States. Most library books in Queens do not go out of date. They wear out from overuse and fall to pieces.

The library circulates the nation's highest number of books, tapes and videos—15.3 million a year.

In the sprawling borough that lies across the East River from Manhattan, library card holders check out more books per capita than users of any big city library system in the country. The 1.95 million residents of Queens use the public library five times more frequently than residents of the District of Columbia, twice as often as residents of Prince George's County and a third more frequently than people in Montgomery County.

The Los Angeles library serves about 1.4 million more people than the Queens library, but last year people in Queens checked out 4 million more books.

"We have complaints all the time from our older clientele, who want quiet and who want space. Well, our libraries aren't quiet and, for the most part, they aren't spacious," says Gary Strong, director of the Queens Public Library, one of three public library networks in the city. There is also a library system in Brooklyn and the New York Public Library serves Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island.

"The people who use our library are highly motivated," Strong adds. "They want jobs. They want to learn how to live in America."

Queens has the highest percentage of foreign-born residents of any borough in New York, a city that at the end of the 20th Century is sponging up one of the great waves of immigration in its history. Nearly half the residents of Queens speak a language other than English at home. More than a third were born in a foreign country.

The extraordinary love affair between immigrants and libraries is a century-old story in New York, as it is in other American cities that have been immigrant gateways. The most crowded libraries in New York have always been in neighborhoods with the largest population of recent immigrants.

That love affair continues at the end of the century, but with complications, especially in Queens. The book lovers who elbow each other for space in the library's 62 branches are more than ever before a mixed bunch—racially, linguistically and culturally.

The busiest branch in the nation's busiest library system is in Flushing, which has been inundated in the past decade with Chinese, Korean, Indian, Russian, Colombian and Afghan immigrants. Until a handsome new library building opens this summer, the Flushing branch is crammed into a former furniture store.

Inside, there are not nearly enough little chairs for all the little kids who wiggle and squeal and devour picture book after picture book. Stacks of blue plastic-coated foam pads are available so kids and parents can sit on the tile floor.

Queues form behind computer terminals that allow immigrants to search home country periodicals using Chinese, Korean and Roman writing systems. "Watch Your Belongings!" signs are in English, Spanish and Chinese.

There are no public bathrooms—space being too precious to waste on nonessentials. But there are librarians who speak Russian, Hindi, Chinese, Korean, Gujarati and Spanish.

"Have you ever wondered where the new South Asian materials are?" asks a sign taped to a pillar in the Flushing branch library. "Well, wonder no more. They're here! You can find materials in: Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Malayalam and Urdu."

"We have gone from a dozen countries to a hundred countries," says Strong. "We are not just waiting for them to come to us after they have solved all their problems, after they have a job and after they have the kids in school. We go after them. We advertise. We do not check their immigration status."

Immigration had already transformed Flushing from a staid middle-class Italian and Jewish community into a polyglot boom town when Ruth Herzburg took over eight years ago as library branch manager. Herzburg quickly discovered that the branch was falling behind the newcomer mix.

Herzburg tentatively put a small collection of Korean-language books out on a shelf five years ago. "Those books walked off the shelves. Before that, we didn't really know the Koreans were here," she said.

As immigrants make the transition from their native language to English, Herzburg says they hunger for basically the same kinds of books—translations of potboiler American fiction like Danielle Steel, self-help books and computer books. Many immigrants to Queens have technical skills, she says, and they demand science, technology and business books.

By spending more money per capital on books and other materials than any other major urban American library system, the Queens Public Library has marshaled its resources to seduce each new group of immigrants and lure them into the branches.

The seduction starts by sending library emissaries to immigrant associations that work with recent arrivals. In the languages of the immigrants, they explain how the library can show them how to get a driver's license, navigate the Internet and learn English. The library runs the largest English-as-a-second-language program in the country and says it could double its enrollment if it had more space and money.

"Starting with survival skills, they get introduced to the library and it is often the beginning of a lifelong habit," said Adriana Acauan Tandler, head of the library's New Americans program and herself an immigrant from Brazil.

Using census data and a demographer and by commissioning polls among Queens residents, the library has been able to spot holes in library usage. The biggest hole in the late 1980s was among Spanish speakers.

The library went after them with an aggressive public relations campaign. It translated applications for library cards into Spanish, purchased spots on Spanish radio and pulled together a Spanish collection of 100,000 items in 10 branches.

"In just three years, we found that Spanish speakers were using the library as much as anybody in the borough. They read everything from Cervantes to 'Superman.' The secret of our success is that we give people what they want, instead of what we think they should have," Acauan Tandler said.

What adults want, above all else, is translations of American bestsellers in their own language. The library tries to buy them

quickly and in quantity. At the Flushing branch, the head librarian has about \$125,000 a year to spend as she wishes on "hot" books.

"We don't wait for the central office to send out popular books. We like to go around to all the local bookstores and buy popular books off the shelves. All the books are in foreign languages. We don't even have an English-language bookstore in Flushing," said Herzburg.

Pin-Pin Lin tries to steer her boys, ages 10 and 13, away from Chinese-language books. She prefers they read only in English. To that end, she makes sure they leave the library after each visit with 20 or so English books in the shopping bag.

"I don't care if they read all. Kid is kid. If they don't like books. I bring them back and get more," said Lin.

# SENSE OF CONGRESS ON 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF FOUNDING OF MODERN STATE OF ISRAEL

SPEECH OF

**HON. SAM FARR**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 28, 1998*

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate the 50th year of statehood of a strong and trusted ally, the State of Israel. A young nation with a long and honorable history, Israel has been a symbol of hope and a land of opportunity for millions of Jews throughout the world. Surviving six wars, continuing terrorism, and severe economic boycotts, Israel's 600,000 citizens have shown the world what it means to be committed to one's homeland.

Against all odds, Israel has established a dynamic, vibrant democracy that supports free elections free press and freedom of speech. A country of remarkable accomplishments, Israel has moved from a poor third-world country to a thriving state with unlimited economic prospects, Israel has molded fields of sand into successful farms, villages of historic destruc-

tion into brilliant cities with prosperous businesses and enterprising kibbutzes, and barren desert lands into lush forests of green. Persecution endured has been turned into prosperity, isolation into idealism and hardship into heroism.

With all its successes, the people of Israel have never forgotten who they are, the roots that intertwine every Israeli with every member of the global Jewish community. Israel has welcomed over 1,000,000 refugees with open arms, providing work and learning opportunities, with the chance to become a vital part of the Israel experience.

The United States' bond with Israel is stronger than ever, a friendship that has flourished and helped strengthen both of our nations. Working together for peace in the Middle East, we all yearn to see a day when children no longer need be afraid of war and terrorism and all families throughout the region feel safe and secure. We can now look forward to a time that this troubled area of the world toils towards tearing down age-old barriers instead of erecting new ones.

The Israeli nation has become an inspiration for people the world over. I salute Israel on this joyous anniversary and pledge my support to it enduring legacy